



Fa 3. 6





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

<https://archive.org/details/b21695489>



To Joseph Anderson from the
CALLIRHOE;
Printer Edinburgh 1879.
COMMONLY CALLED

THE WELL OF SPA,

OR

THE NYMPH OF ABERDENE.

RESUSCITAT BY

WILLIAM BARCLAY,

M. of Art, and Doctor of Physicke.

What Diseases may be cured by drinking of the
Well of Spa at *Aberdene*, and what is the true
Use thereof.



As it was printed by ANDRO HART, *Anno Dom. 1615.*

And now

Reprinted at *Aberdene* by *John Forbes Younger*, PRINTER
to the TOWN and UNIVERSITIE, *Anno Domini*
M.DC.LXX.



Aberdeen:

PRINTED BY BURNETT AND RETTIE,

And sold at their Office, Nether Kirkgate; also by the Bookfellers.

1799.

[*Price Three-pence.*]



R40345

To the very Honorable
Mr. ROBERT PATRIE, of *Portlethin*,
Lord-Provest.

ALEXANDER ALEXANDER,	}	Bailies.
GILBERT MOLLESON,		
JOHN DUNCAN,		
WALTER ROBERTSON,		
GILBERT BLACK, Dean of Gild.		
ALEXANDER BURNET, Treasurer.		

And to the remnant of the honorable Councill
of the CITY of ABERDENE.

VERY HONORABLE,

*T*HERE are many advantages, with which divine Providence hath blessed our City above many in the Kingdom, which are so many obligations laid upon us, as they are talents put in our hands whereof we can never discharge our selves, but by a thankfull and diligent improvement for the honour of the giver, and the good both of our selves and others. I need not fall upon particulars, which are obvious to most amongst us, and what is more remote from the vulgar reach, is to be the subject matter of more polished understandings, especially of these in authority, to work upon; whereby they may the more benefit the City, and make it happy with an addition of new accomodations of profit, pleasure, or both. Whilst I was taking a view of some ancient passages, relating to our Town, I was brought to remembrance in what esteeme that health-giving Spring (through divine bountie) commonly called our Well of Spa had wont to be, and how in

The Epistle Dedicatory.

my time I had seen it adorned (be reason of its excellent qualities sealed by many notable experiences upon sickly persons,) with a long wyde stone which conveyed the waters from the Spring, with the purtraicture of six Apostles hewen upon either side thereof, which being verie old and worne, a vertuous Citizen George Iamison, did build it of new, and put a Tomb of hewen stone over it, because of the many proofs he had of it in his own person in cureing him of the stone: which by a violent torrent of waters falling into that streame running by it, did suddenly overturne it, and buried the Spring in the ruins, so much of the hill having fallen therewith. It is worth the observing, that this was the year our late troubles did first beginne, and seemed to be an Ill-Omen both to our City and Country. But this Spring being digged for at the sollicitous desire of some diseased Citizens, who did find renewed experiences of its powerfull vertues in the cure of tormenting Gravels, Deadly Colicks, and desperat Hydrophies &c. I judged that we should be worse than these two Leapers at the sledge of Samaria, 2 Kings 7. 9. if we should hyde this mercy from others; And therefore did resolve (with your permission) to cause rebuild it, in a surer way probably and at more distance from the streame then heretofore. And no sooner had I falne upon this resolution, but this book set forth by that learned and famous Physician Doctor William Barclay, was brought to my hands, which did write thereupon and was printed in the year, 1615. which here ye have deservedly caused Re-print, that his memorie might live in honour amongst us who while he lived had so high esteeme of our

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Citizens and City, (as may from this booke, and his Apobaterium or his last farewell to ABERDENE be clearly evident) no less, than for the information of strangers according to that civil hospitality which ye and your worthie Ancestors have been much commended for. I need not here speake to the commendation of the water, Physicians have done this in the ensuing discourse. Only I hope the experience that diseased persons may have of them shal sufficiently give them ground to bless GOD who is the bountiful bestower of all good things. It shal be my desire to the LORD, that as the ruine of this precious Well was a forerunner of much ruine and trouble to both City and Kingdom, its restauration may prove a happy presage of our futur prosperity and peace.

In order to which I shal wish a blessed success to all your publict proposals lately made, which may tend to the repairing of our ruines, and freedom from our heavie burdens of debts and taxes. Wherefore very Honourable, go on, faint not, but by patient and diligent endeavours: remove the mistakes of withstanders, informe the ignorant, encourage the discreet, convince the selfish-spirited, and by your prudence dispel our divisions when any appears, and let all concur in their stationes to have ABERDENE upon all good accompts deservedly honoured with the tittle and motto of BON-ACCORD: Which shal ever be the earnest desire of

RIGHT HONOURABLE

Your most affectionat servant
and well Wisher,

PHILOPOLIS.

To the Right Worshipfull
Sir ROBERT KEITH of Benholme Knight,
WILLIAM BARCLAY Doctor of Physick with-
eth health.

*R*IGHT Worshipful, Demades, an Orator of Athens was wont to say to the people, that they never treated of peace but in their mourning garments, when the enemy had killed their principal kinsmen. So the people of this Realme enter never in consideration of their health, but when they are overthrowen with diseases. I would have your Worship to skunne this blame, being so civill, so circumspect, so careful in all your other adoes: It were a blotte to the worth of your many vertues, to neglect the remembrance of your health, even in the perfect possession of your health, that you may prevent the battell of diseases, when you are in the peaceable prosperity of welfare. To which effect I offer heartily to your Worship myself; and this Nymph: myself to assist your judicious understanding with such precepts of Physick, as I have learned from the most expert practioners of Europe: This Nymph to irrigate yearly the plants of good disposition, which I see flourish in your naturall constitution. I hope you will accept of us both: of me, for the love of letters, which I know you love: and of the Nymph for the love of her native soyle, that is, the territorie of ABERDENE, which honoureth you so highly, and which you love and adorne by so many heroical acts, and principally by your own presense. In this hope I continue

Your Worships
most humble and most
affectionat servitour
and Physician,
Barclay Doctor.

C A L L I R H O E ;

COMMONLY CALLED

THE WELL OF SPA,

OR

THE NYMPH OF ABERDENE.

RESUSCITAT BY

WILLIAM BARCLAY,

M. of Art, and Doctor of Physicke.

HIPPOCRATES, in his Book *De Aëre Locis & Aquis*, sayeth, that a Physician should at his ariving to any land where he mindeth to exercise his Art, consider diligently the nature and situation of the soyle, the most familiar and accustomed winds, the varietie and weight of waters. Which lesson moved me at my returning to *Scotland*, from thirty years perigrination, to enter in examination of these three points, proponed by the most admirable *Hippocrates* : neither did I extend the eyes of my contemplation towards the borders of this semi-land, but I bordered the object of my inquisition, with the Water of *Tay* in the one side, and with the dangerous gulfe of *Pightland Firth* in the other side. First then ; I divided so much of the land as I choosed to consider, in High-land and Low-land : and I found the High-land to nourish stronge, rude, cruel, long-

living, laborious, and leacherous men : and that by reason of their food : milke, cheefe, butter, fleshes, oate-bread, much exercise. (I will remit the matter of *Aqua vitæ* to another place.) And as I mused on these High-land-men, I remembered that in our historie of *SCOTLAND* it is reported that no diseases were known to this holy Iland in time of our Fathers, but the Gravel, the Cold, which Physicians call *Catarrhus*. For prooffe of which was there never a man in *Strethspey* vexed with the Tertian ague, while the year 1613, years : when that disease began in *Murray* and sundry other parts of this Realme *Epidemical* or contagious. But leaving these High-land diseases to their impostors, and barbarous leeches, I returne to our low and civil parts : where the inhabitants being more delicatly trained up, as subject to greater diseases, the situation of the soyle being toward the North, and lying open to the East : the ground which they labour, must be cold and moyst : The diseases of their Bodies, Catarrhes, Gravels, Diarrhæes, Guts, Colickes, Apoplexies, Paralyties, and such like ; And because the winds are boysterous and cold, the maladies of their minds are much worse then the diseases of their Bodies, Pride, Anger, Hatred, Envie, Cruelty, Inhumanitie, Inconstancie : neither will I proceed farder in this matter, reserving without flatterie the true commendation of *Aberdene*, whose inhabitants beyond the nature of their soyle, and in spight of *ÆOLVS* and all his winds, do so civilize their Burgh, with the continual practise of Vertue and Learning, and so reple-

nish their hearts with courteous behaviour, that if their soyle were not more barren & barbarous then their souls, even a French man himself might judge *Aberdene* to be the *Lutetiola* or litle *Paris* of this Septentrional corner of North *Britanne*. The third thing which a Physician should consider, is the water, which within the limits that I have chosen for to examine, is not so farre from the best waters of the world, as it is from the worse: And in most parts of this North, it is wholsome and good, and needeth not to be ashamed to abide the tryal of *HIPPOCRATES* rule. But leaving to treat more largely of this common usual water, I will lavell in my discourse, at the medicinal water, which not only orneth the Towne of *Aberdene*, but bleffeth the territorie about it with a treasure of health, more worth then the wealth of *CROESUS*. I will not report the antiquitie of such Physicke, neither shall I reckon the number of such famous fountaines as have had vertue to cure innumerable diseases: but I will in few tearmes describe the nature and vertues of the Well which springeth at *Aberdene*. And before I enter to dye my lippes in that sacred liquour, I will make a sute to that more savoury water then the Poetical *Castaliane* fountain: that as I wish all people to haunt and honour thy streams, so *Dasecura, tui sit mihi sana sitis*. And I being preserved by thy vertue from such diseases, as I am perswaded thou canst cure,

Tu fueris Musis Pegasus unda meis.

Thus having premitted my protestation to

that *Abredonian* Nymph, I will beginne to re-
 veale the secrets of her birth, and digge under
 that hill, that I may discover the original of her
 spring. I will set down (that my discourse
 may carry a method) the true nature of that
 water, how to know if that water have such
 specificke and magnetical vertues as I alledge:
 and what are the effects of that water: and last-
 ly, in what manner that water should be used
 and drunken. I lay then as a grounde that of
 all liquours, there is none more apt then water,
 to receive the qualities and vertues of any simple:
 for which cause the Physicians most ordinarily
 make their infusions and decoctions in water:
 the reason of this is, because water of it self
 is voide of taste, and so much the more fit to
 receive both the taste, and all other second qua-
 lities from all simples: yea, not only second
 qualities, which are manifest and known by the
 senses, but also hidden and occult qualities, of
 which, some do alter the taste, as the infusion
 of *Rheubarbe*: some do not alter the taste, as
 the infusion of *Antimonium*, or the decoction of
 gold. Notwithstanding that water be a fit
 subject to receive the impression of diverse
 tastes, yet doth it not receive so commodiously
 the diversitie of odours: and in that respect the
 perfumers do not infuse their sweet odorife-
 rous drogges in water, but in oyle, which we
 call *Oleum Balaninum*, which oyle is as voide it
 self of all odours, as water is of saviours: this
 is the reason also why the daintie, delicate and
 sawce victuallers or cooks in their restoring, and
 Venerian pasties put the roote called *Petatos*,

which of it self is tasteless and unfavourie, to receive the temper and pickle of all the other spices and nourishing aliments. Having then settled as a principle in Physicke that water is a commodious matter to receive the accidental formes of all simples, I conclude that this water of the Well of *Aberdene* hath received qualities and vertues from such minerals as it floweth thorow: which are Iron and Vitriol: for the effects do argue the mixtion of these two. In so much that I dare affirme this *Abredonian* Nymph to be sister Germane to the Well of *Forges* in *Normandie*, and may well worke as many worthy cures as it, if it were as wisely used and as frequently. There is no dogmaticke Physician in *Europe*, which doth not allow the use of Iron and Vitriol in the cures of many diseases: so that Nature her self in this water having intermingled so prudently the qualities of these two simples, it standeth with reason that this water being embrued with the most spiritual and subtile essence of both, shal worke powerfully the medicinal effects of both: which effects particularly and at large hereafter I shal declare. Now I will proceed, and shew that the conceit of Nature is admirable, in joyning the Iron and Vitriol to bring forth one effect: seeing there is such matrimony and copulation between the Iron and Vitriol, that there is no part of the World, where Vitriol grow but Iron is adherent. This secret was fully understood by the ancient Poetical Philosophers, that coupled *Mars* in Matrimony with *Venus*, for *Mars* signifieth Iron, *Venus* Vitriol or Coppres or Cop-

per. The youngest of a thousand Alchymists can extract *Cuprum ex Calcantho*, & *ex Cupro Ferrum*; so that to returne to our purpose, this water hath all the spiritual vertue of Vitriol, and all the medicinal qualities of Iron, and all the insensible energie that proceedeth of the mixtion of both. This is the reason why this water hath no such force when it is carried, as it hath at the spring it self: because the vertue of it consisteth in a spiritual and occulte qualitie, which eventeth and vanisheth by the carriage. I have seen in *Paris*, water brought from the Well of *Spa*, that is two hundred Scottish miles, but of none effect, no efficacie: only to satisfie the languishing curiositie of some prodigal patients. Thus much concerning the first parte of my Discourse. Now I proceed to shew by what Arte we shal know that this water hath these qualities. For trial of which you shal take a little of a nutgal, bruise it in pieces, and throw it in a drinking glass full of this water, and if it be the true water, it will become red, like clared wine: notwithstanding that a nutgal maketh all other liquour black, were it never so redde of itself; neither is there any moysture in the world, except it be endued with this Vitriolical vertue, that can draw a scarlet colour out of a nutgal. Beside this essay there is another which consisteth in distilling of this water: for in the bottome of the Alembicke, there will remaine a matter unfavourie, sometime red, and sometime blacke. The third essay, is the quick effect and speedy passing of this water, through such a long and

crooked Labyrinth of wayes, which are between the stomacke and the bladder, and that without any weight or tension in the Hypochondres, without any swelling or puffing up of the body, which followeth the excess of any other drinke in the world, yea were it wine.

The rest of my discourse shal specifye the effects of this water; and how we ought to use our selves when we drinke of it: because it were a temerare and dangerous thing to any man to use this water in abundance, not having his body prepared and disposed for the same: for having the body full of obstructions, the stomacke full of crudities; the mesentere full of thicke slimie humours, the passages of the liver ditted with indigest chyle, it were a rash and careless boldness to hazard our health, seeing this water runneth through the channel of our veines, with such impetuositie that it carryeth with it, whatsoever cruditie it encountreth in the way.

— *Non alius per pinguia culta.*

In mare purpureum violentior influit amnis.

No water natural or artificial can pass more swiftly through mans body to the bladder, where the sea of all our humidities are collected, then doth this vitriolical liquor. But hereafter shal be declared by what means the patient shal dispose and prepare his body, that is, to crave aide and relief at the hands of this courteous and cristaline *ABREDONIAN* Nymph.

For better understanding of the following discourse, I will premit two things. First, that there is no disease that chanceth into mans body, that can receive any great detriment from

the right use of this water, except it be the diseases of the lights : because this water moveth the cough, and increaseth the dolor to the pulmonickes.

Secondly, this water is a present and sure remedy against all obstructions, which are the mothers and authors of most part of our diseases. Now I call obstruction a ditting or stopping of any passage of the body, which obstruction cometh most ordinarily in the smal veines of the mesentere and liver, in the passages of the gall, in the ureters or passages of the bladder, in the veines which open towards the matrix or mother, through which ditted and obstructed wayes this water peirceth, without any harme or detriment by a deterfive and penetrant vertue, and taketh away the slimie, thick, glewie, teugh matter, which sticketh to the banckes of the channels, while this water as another *Nilus* washeth away those corrupted excrementis from this hidden interior *Ægypt* of our bowels. This water worketh not with every one after one sort : for if the matter be in the neires, the ureters or bladder, it expelleth the humours by urines : if the cause of the disease be in the melt, in the mesentere or the liver, this water worketh by the passage of the stoole : if the matter be in the matrix, the water worketh by the ordinarie purgation of that part. And yet albeit this water be such a justiciar, as executeth her sentence against the diseases of every part, by banishing the matterial causes, through their own passages, yet she disburdeneth the greatest parte of all the mor-

bisicke causes by the urines. I have seen sundry men & women cured of great & tedious diseases by vomiting after the drinking of this water.

This Nymph, beyond the custome of all her sexe, refresheth and augmenteth the wearie and dull spirits of any patient, she corroborateth and confirmeth a weake stomacke, she quickneth a languishing appetite, she helpeth digestion, she pearceth through all obstructions, and cureth diseases that follow thereupon, as the yallow, the pale colours, a skirre or hardness of the liver or melt: she giveth health principally to the general partes of the one and the other sex, she is the *Panacea* for the stone in the neirs or bladder, and taketh away the hereditare disposition to that disease, by altering the natural temperament of these partes, and cutting away the antecedant cause: it cureth also the ulcers of the neirs and bladder, and healeth the carnositie which is engendred *in meatu urinario*. And there is no better remedie for the filthy & stinking *Genorrhæa*, which vulgarly is called the chaud-pifs, which is the ordinarie and sure reward of abusers of *Venus*: if the abouondance of slipperie and teugh phlegme impede a woman to conceive, or being conceived, cause her to prevent the right time of her birth, the discreet use of this water will assure her of better success. I have cured fundrie of that sex in *France*, of a long, noysome and fearful sickness, to which many of them are subject, (I knowe they understand what I meane,) by drinking of such water, and that both virgins, widows, and married women.

This water hath a special vertue to helpe those

which have a natural propension to the leprie or *Elephantiasis*, because it tempereth the roasting heat of the liver, which burneth the blood. It doth much good to all cancrus and maligne ulcers. In this place I will examine and try three doubts which may arise of the former discourse.

First, whether or not can this water helpe those any thing, which are opprest with a confirmed and consolidate stone in the bladder: for answer to which question, I say, that if a stone be of a middle bigness, and consolidated as hard as such stones are wont to be, that neither this water, nor any other remedie invented by the ingine of man can be able to dissolve it, neither can the bladder resist the violence and force of such a medicament that can demolish so hard a stone, although it were conveyed to the bladder through the wand, which is the nearest way. Neither could the stomacke digest or abide the strength of any such liquor or poudre being taken at the mouth, in which respect the Highland impostor which is lately come to *Innerness*, doth bewray his own folly and madness, to vaunt of himself, and make a false rumor go abroad, that he can dissolve any stone in the bladder, were it never so great, never so hard, which if he could do, he were worthie to be stripped with many stripes, because he looseth so much time in *Innerness*, and goeth not to some more politicke part, where he might conquer Kingdoms, by that so rare and so profitable an Art. I saw at *London* in the late Queen *ELIZABETHS* dayes an impostour hanged, because he avouched that he was the Son of God,

and had sent his supposed prophets through the countrey, to vaunt of his coming. This Irish impostor doth imitate that Pseudochrist, and sendeth through the countrey, his prophets to abuse the people with a false rumor. I protest before GOD, I envy not his estate, but I would wish that he could do the thing that he sayeth ; but I cannot abide such abuse of that Art, wherein I have spent many years under the discipline of the most learned Physicians of *France*. Yet albeit this water cannot dissolve such a stone, it doth much good to those that are vexed therewith : for it fortifieth the bladder, and washeth away the slime which is about the stone, the which slime maketh the stone greater then it is indeed, and riveth the wound too much at the cutting.

The second question is, whether this water hath any vertue to cure the Hydropsie or not. To which I answer, First, that of all remedies this is the surest to prevent the dropsie, and to correct the disposition from whence the Dropsie proceedeth : which ordinarily is weakness of the liver, through exorbitant heat : I know that hydropsie floweth at times from a cold liver also, but the most frequent cause is hote. Doctor MARTINE at *Paris*, one of the most learned men of *Europe*, not in Physicke only, but in languages and all other sort of literature, finding himself inclined to hydropsie, postponing all other sort of medicament, he took resolution to pass to the Well of *Forges*, not farre from *Rouvan* in *Normandie*, which Well is sister German to our Nymph, with hope to returne from thence in health, or then never to see *Paris* a-

gaine, and in this resolution he took leave from threescore of Physicians his colleagues, and went to *Forges*, where he recovered his health, and lived many years thereafter. I answer secondly, that a man being perfectly hydroped, his hydropsie being caused of an obstruction and hote intemperie of the liver or melt: this water will cure him, or nothing else will cure him, because it correcteth the intemperie, it openeth the obstructions, and it voideth water out of the bellie.

The third question is, whether this water hath any force to help those that are subject to the *Arthritis* or general or particular gout. For by this discourse it appeareth that this water openeth the passages, and giveth place to the serous and watric humours to go to the joynts & lights where the gout is formed: for it is called the gout because the watric humors *guttatim cadunt in articulos*. I answer that this water openeth the passages of the mesentere, the liver, the melt, the reines, but I thinke that it taketh no leasure in the body, to go to the joynts, because it passeth so suddenly through the first and second region of the body, that it stayeth not to go to the third region, and albeit it did go, it fortifieth the ways: for it hath not only an opening force, but a roborating vertue also, and besides that, draweth water out of the joynts, rather then filleth them with water, and because a hote intemperie of the liver, is the original cause of *Arthritis*, this water cureing that intemperie, it must of force cut away the spring of that disease.

At last now I thinke expedient to declare how

the patients should behave themselves towards this Nymph, to the effect they have no just occasion to thinke evil, either of her or me: the meetest time to drinke of this water is when the weather is hottest & driest, as it is in *June, July,* and a part of *Agust*, because then the water is lightest, and of easiest digestion, the superfluous vapours being drawn out of the earth by the heat of the Sun. Before we enter to drink of this medicinal water, it is meetest that our bodies be prepared and purged by the advise of some learned Physician, (and when I say a learned Physician, I seclude barbarous apothecaries; high-land leeches, impostors, and montebankes, Mercurial medicines, that is to say, rubbers with quicke silver, and all these which can give no reason of their calling.)

Amongst the *Lacedemonians* he was accounted the most gallant man that could steale most, providing that he were not apprehended *flagranti delicto*. In *BRITAINE* he is esteemed the best Physician who killeth most, providing that he be not accused. But if there were such search here as is in *France* or *Italie*, the people would be better served, and the King have more subjects. I saw a weighty matter pleaded before the court of Parliament at *Paris*. The history was this, a Physician had prescribed to a noble-man a certaine quantity of *confectio Alchermes*, it chanced that the patient dyed within a little space. This *confectio Alchermes* had coloured all the chyle in his stomacke like skarlet, which should be white. The Chirurgian which bowelled the man, alledged that the patient was poysoned, the Parents accused the Physician, so it went to

the Barre. And at last both parties heard, and all alledgance ponderated and considered, the Physician was absolved, and the Chirurgian condemned as ignorant, and to pay a Fine, and to restore the Physician to his honour againe.

But returning to our purpose againe; Whosoever disposeth himself to drink of this water, his body must be prepared by the counsel and advice of some learned Physician, by taking clysters and some purgative medicines; I will not here prescribe the formes. Because I will not minister occasion to ignorant leeches to the abuse of mens health. In the mean space that they are drinking this water, it were meet to keep a good dyet, and eat such meat as leave no cruditie, and doth resist melancholy: their drink at their ordinar may be white wine, moderately drunken, mixed with water, and not with the water of this Well, as fundrie do to their own hinder and prejudice: because this water used with their meat, helpeth to carrie the meat to the neirs and bladder before it be perfectly digested. After dinner and supper it shal not be amiss to use a digestive powder for to dissipate the winde, and close the stomacke.

Also it is sufficient to drinke every day once of this water, and that in the morning some two or three houres after the ryfing of the Sun. As concerning the quantitie which ought to be drunken, it should be according to the disease and nature of every one: at the beginning they should use moderately, and every day ascend while they arrive at the highest of that which they may drinke, neither hath it been found that the drinking of four or five pounds have

done any harme, albeit there be many men and women, that can not reach to that quantitie. Alwayes it is better to drinke longer and lesse, then to drinke a great quantity in few dayes.

This is the fume of which may be saide concerning the nature and use of that water, neither will I wearie the Lector with any longer discourse, beseeching him onely to hear me patiently in few termes, render thanks to God, which for the benefit of our poor diseased persons in this Ile hath revealed this secrecy, and that in such a part, that the ingine of man could not have devised it better: not in the Highlands and wilderness, not in some countrie beggerly village, as *Spa* and *Forges* are, but amongst the most civil, and courteous, and charitable people of this Realme, where the poor may be assisted with almes, and with Physicians, where the rich may be harboured, according to their estates, and where all sort of ranks may have fit company, honest recreation, good example, great pietie, and all kind of eaes and commodities that any man or woman desire: Blessed and honoured be that Omnipotent and beneficial Father, and Author of health, and the first of all Physicians.

F I N I S.

APPROBATION.

THOUGH a Stranger to the Authour, yet the elaborat Treatise on the fountaine, experimented so often be us in this age; for the Colick of the Stomack, Nephritick-Colick, Strangurie, and Stonnie-Gravel especially, also for the Hydropsie, taken with a specifick powder, cannot but be approven and recomended to all persons as most beneficial.

JAMES LESLY, Med. Doct.



THOUGH the fame and reputation of the Author of this little treatise, *Doctor Barclay*, upon this our Well of *Aberdene*, be such as might sufficiently perswad any of the truth of what he hath written, whose abilities for learning was such, that the famous *Lipsius* (who wrot so learnedly and eloquently of the Roman antiquities, &c.) gave him this testimony; That if he were dying, he knew no person on earth he would leave his pen to, but *Dr. William Barclay*. This I have from a sober person of good note, to whom the gentle-man that heard it out of *Lipsius* own mouth, told it.

And though there might be multitudes of instances given, of the Vertues and eminent Cures this water hath wrought; I shal only produce these few living witnesses to testify the truth from amongst our selves.

Mr. John Forbes, Sheriff Deput of *Aberdene*, some few years agoe, being vehemently tormented with a Colick both in his stomach and belly, whereof he could have no ease by any prescribed means to abate the violence thereof, so that there was nothing looked for but death shortly to ensue; after all other means, this as the last was suggested to him,

and he by drinking liberallie of this water, was not only eased of his paine, but in few houres perfectly cured. This Gentle-man being subject to relaps into his disease, finds sudden relief by the use of this water: And some others who are of chiefeſt note in the place also, who are subject to the like Colick.

Charles Robertson, late Baillie in *Aberdene*, being often subject to the paine of the gravel, was not long since sore afflicted, and had his urine stoped altogether for four or five dayes: being advised to drink of our *Well of Spa* waters by a person that had found the vertue of them, did drink a large draught or two thereof, and verie quicklie got free passage and ease of all his paine. And upon assault from this disease, upon his address to this remedie through Gods blessing finds deliverance.

Mr. James Kennedy Younger Sheriff Clark was exceedinglie tormented with a desperate Colick, which was of that sort, they call *Iliaca Passio*, after the use of several remedies prescribed by the Physician, and no ease attained: all his relations coming to see him die: himself did call earnestly for the water of our *Well of Spa*, and drank a good quantitie thereof, and shortly thereafter, through the favour of God, it wrought so well, that in short space he got seven stools and was perfectly cured.

Margaret Moir, relict of *Patrick Gellie*, merchand in *Aberdene*, having fallne into a deadly Hydropticke, and having used several remedies by her Physicians advise, at last the Doctor having seen but a little before this book written by Dr. *Barclay* (which till then was quite buried,) advyſed her to drink of the *Well of Spa*, for quenching her violent drowth, and provocking evacuations, it was so blessed of God for her good, that in few dayes she was perfectly cured.

Let these few instances suffice for information of experiences from Persons so well knowen in *Aberdene*.

Whosoever would drink this water for curing diseases or preserving health, needs no other directions, then what the judicious Authour hath set down, towards the last part of this book. And it is hoped that who uses it accordingly, shal find cause to blesse God for his goodnesse in blessing *Aberdene*, with such a spring of waters, and all those that will make use of it aright.

In memorie of that excellent, rare, and renowned Spring the Well
of Spa, famous for Antiquitie, and singular good for divers
Diseases.

Written some 55 years ago.

O Gallant Spring, of fountains King,
blest from the Heavens above :
Thy gushing streams like *Titans* beams
sometimes thou didst remove.
All much admires, since thou retires
unto thy former place,
The *Muses* nyne, all in a tryne,
pursue thy foemie face.
Above thy font, *Parnassus* mont
with forked top doth stand :
A true repose for Poets choise,
a Phenix of our land.
There is the rock, where Singers flock,
the Musick sweet of *Greece*,
Appollo stands with silver wands,
in honour of that peece.
May I ask now, yea where, and how
so long that thou hast been ?
Almost decay'd, we thought thee stray'd,
and from thy palace seen.
Though thou was lost, yet to thy cost,
thou has made thy retoure,
With greater gloire, then er'st before,
with pomp and high honour.
The house of fame, that *Iove* did claime,
most gorgious to behold,
Whose turrets bright did give such light
of yellow birnisht gold :
Show thou in plaine was thou in *Spain*,
thy Sister there to see :
Yet we dispence, with thy offence,
more welcome shalt thou be.
Our Lords and Peeres thy worke admeers,

Within this statelie Toun;
 And smiles to see such troupes by thee
 still flocking up and down.
 Lords adde their glore, and thee decore,
 and grace thy passage so,
 The tender plants about thee haunts,
 to mitigate thy wo.
 The highest ranks, about thy banks
 most glorious is seen :
 Each termeth thee, when they thee see
 the Nymph of ABERDENE.
 Thou dost comfort the aged sort,
 and thus thy glorie growes :
 And streams of pride hard by thee flyde,
 as thou with beauties flowes,
 The maids so gay in fresh array,
 so seemlie do conveene ;
 To grace thy springs with daintie things ;
 that Nature hath e're seen.
 The sisters three, for love of thee
 saluts thy channell still,
 And all do stand with lute in hand,
 attending on thy will.
 Each bird and flowre, from Natures bowre,
 behold thee by and by,
 And fields so browne both up and down,
 as they in order lye ;
 The Sun at night sets in thy sight,
 and last with thee is seen :
 Long mot thou reigne, of fountains King,
 brave Nymph of ABERDENE.

Quod I. Moir.

Upon the Well of Spa at Aberdene.

THIS spring with health, to many sick doth flow,
 If they'le but use it, as this book doth show ;
 If Gout or Gravel, Colick, Hydropisie,
 Do paine thee, drink thou here, and healed be.
 The Divine Giver blefs thou, so thou may
 This precious gift more freely use alway.

A Description of the Well as now built in
hewne stone 1670, with this inscription.

*The Stomack, Reins, the Liver, Splen, yea sure :
A thousand evils this wholesome spring doth cure.*

HERE flowes a noble Spring, for health to all,
That's griev'd with Gravel, its medicinal,
For Colick, Gout, Hydropsie, why not then ?
Which Heavens hath blest, should honour'd be by men ?
This Nymph within her shield a Sun doth bear,
In his full glory as an embleme clear,
Of perfect charitie, her motto this,
AS HEAVEN GIVES ME SO GIVE I THEE, she is
Likewise adorn'd with royal badges three,
The Thistle, Rose, the Lilly, which all be :
Crown'd with a Royal Diademe in signe
That o're all sister Nymphs she ought to reigne,
Her vertue, beautie, birth, her praise set forth,
Her patients still admire, and feell her worth.

PHILOPOLIS.

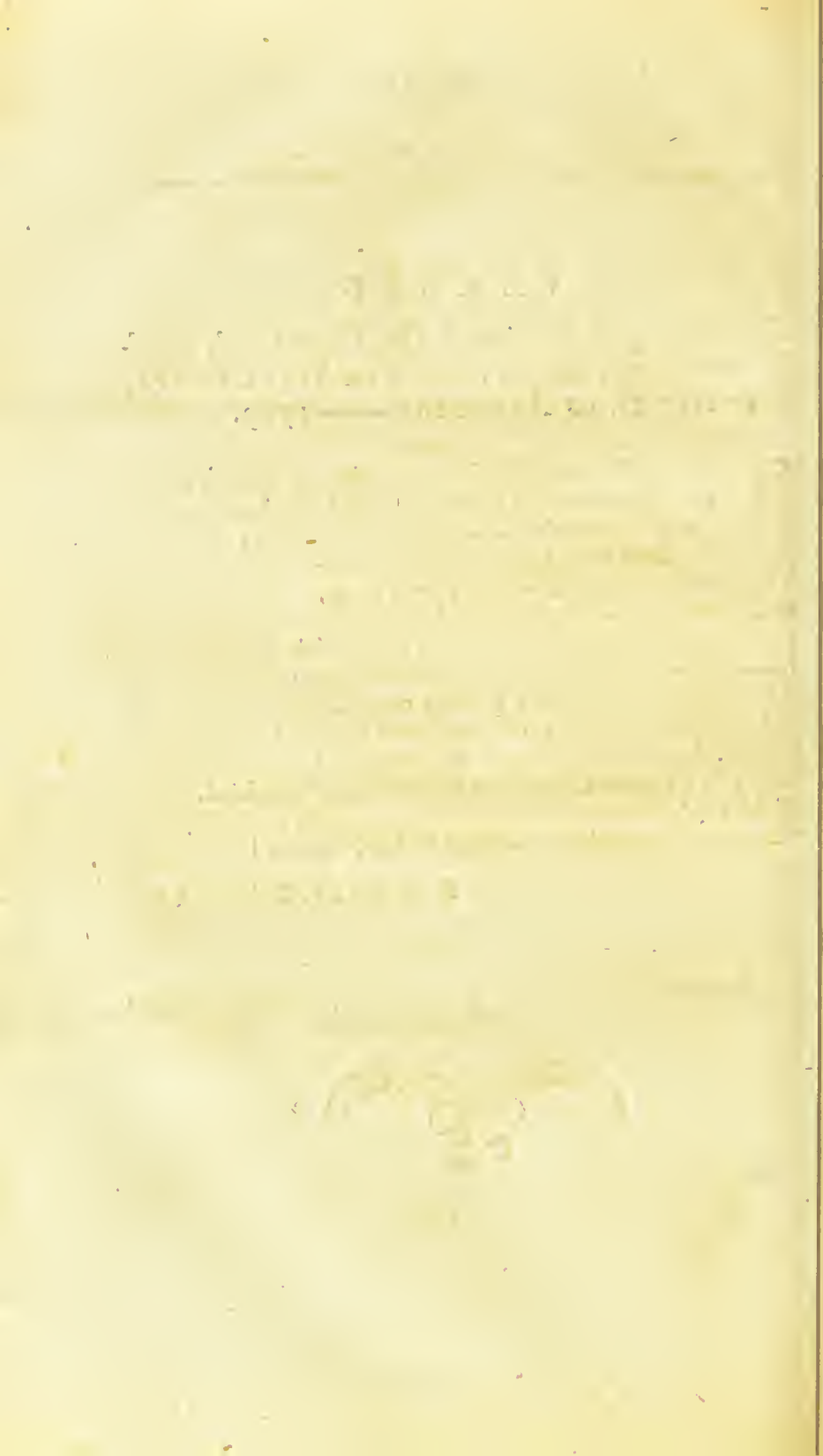
V E R S E S

For the present Edition of Dr. BARCLAY's excellent Treatise on the Virtues of the WELL OF SPA, or NYMPH OF ABERDEEN.—1799.

TRUE,—Fashion, Whim, or Folly, or all three,
Or (what includes them all) dear Novelty,
Has for a while withdrawn thy beauteous Train;
Yet gladly shall they soon return again :—
The blessing, Health, whoever *truly* lacks,
Will soon perceive the fallacy of *Quacks*.
Not but I grant the FIR-HILL WELL is rich
In *Sulphur*—which may serve to cure the *Itch*;
But has it those restoring, bracing powers,
Which Barclay amply proves are found in ours?
It may : but if it has, they're still to find;
While SPA's great Cures—are known to half mankind.
Both let th' Afflicted try—each NYMPH cares :
“*Lat wark bear witness.*”—And to both, success !

A WATER-DRINKER.





Wonders of the Deep!!

THE
MERMAID *not* FABULOUS,
BEING A
DISSERTATION

ON THE EXISTENCE, FIGURE, CHARACTER, AND HABITS
OF THAT PHENOMENON, UNQUESTIONABLY PROVED BY
THE MERMAIDS

Recently seen on the CAITHNESS Coast,

BY

Miss MACKAY, Miss M^cKENZIE, Mr. MUNRO, & Others;

ALSO

The MERWOMAN of HAERLEM,

*Who lived Sixteen Years on Land earning her Bread by
Spinning, and attended Divine Worship, &c. &c.*

WITH

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE MERMAID.

LONDON:

Printed and sold by A. MACPHERSON, Russell Court, Drury Lane;
also P. WRIGHT, Bookseller, Broad Street, Bloomsbury.

1 8 0 9.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

THE

MERMAID *not* FABULOUS.

ALL philosophers have remarked the gradation of animals, from the lowest up to man himself. The ouran outang, in figure; the dog, the elephant, and the beaver, in sagacity, more nearly approach man than many of the links of the inferior animals do each other. In speech, even, the parrot and other birds are assimilated to man; and were their education more liberal than it generally is, their discourse, instead of being a mere set of phrases learned by rote, might be fully as rational and edifying as that of many of the human race. Indeed naturalists and philosophers (and particularly the profound Locke, in his *Essay on the Human Understanding*) have given repeated instances of their carrying on a regular conversation; and although all my readers may not themselves have heard such dialogues, I believe there are few, or none of them, who have not heard relations of this description from their aunts or grandmothers. Lord Monboddo, in his philosophical work, *On the Origin and Progress of Language*, gives it as his decided opinion, that the ouran outang is only a variety of the human race, and that its want of speech is merely a casual defect. So much, then, for the connection between man and the other terrestrial animals.

It is another observation of naturalists, that there is no creature on land to which there is not one analagous in the ocean. Thus there are sea-horses, sea-cows, dog-fishes, cat-fishes, hog-fishes, parrot-fishes, &c. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to suppose, that some of the inhabitants of the deep, in like manner, resemble mankind ; and accordingly, the oceanic animal of which I now treat has at all times been spoken of, under the generic name of Mermaid ; and uniformly represented with the upper parts of the human form, and the lower as a tail resembling that of a fish. The pride of man, however, would not allow it reason ; the pride of naturalists would not even allow it existence.

It is a strange perversness in mankind, that on mere dogmas of the schools, and impositious legends, they believe in the most absurd chimeras, and receive as gospel absolute impossibilities ; while they reject facts established by undoubted evidence, merely because they have not come within the perception of their own senses. Thus because the learned have never been in the situation to see Mermaids, they will not believe the assertions of sailors, fishermen, and inhabitants of the coast, hundreds of whom have had ocular demonstration of this extraordinary animal's existence. The question, however, now comes forward " in a tangible shape ;" and the world is highly indebted to the respectable individuals who, in despite of popular prejudice, have given their testimony, accurately describing what they distinctly saw.

The first of these narratives is that of Miss Mackay, daughter of the Rev. David Mackay, minister of Reay in Caithness, who, together with her cousin, Miss Mackenzie, and two other women and a boy, on the 12th of January last, for an hour together, had a full opportunity of examining minutely, and within a few yards of them, a Mermaid

swimming in Sandside Bay. And Miss Mackay well observes, that her and her cousin's testimony cannot be thought biassed by any former prejudice of the existence of this wonderful creature, as they had always, previously to that period, combated an assertion very common among the lower class, that Mermaids had been frequently seen on the coast.

The next evidence is a letter of Mr. William Munro, schoolmaster of Thurso, to Dr Torrence of 'Thurso, in answer to that learned physician's queries respecting the Mermaid. He relates, that about twelve years ago, when schoolmaster of Reay (the very scene where Miss Mackay's Mermaid made its appearance) he, on a fine summer's day, saw a Mermaid seated on a rock, proudly combing its long and thick hair; and which animal he describes no less particularly than Miss Mackay and Miss Mackenzie did the one they saw. Mr Munro's narrative, he observes, may in some degree be subservient to remove the skepticism of those who are ready to dispute every thing which they cannot fully comprehend, as he states positively, that till then he was not disposed to credit the testimony of others on this subject, and that it was only by seeing the phenomenon he was convinced of its existence.

The letters of Miss Mackay and Mr Munro having been transmitted to Sir John Sinclair, Bart, member for Caithness, a Trustee for Fisheries and Manufactures, &c. and published under the high sanction of his name, cannot fail to add to the conviction of their authenticity. But if it were possible any doubt could exist on this subject, it must be completely removed by the certificate of the Rev. Mr. Mackay, which appears fully to have satisfied the Glasgow Philosophical Society, by whom it has laudably been made public.

The next document is an abstract from a History of the Netherlands, recording, that in the year 1403, a Merwoman, after sinking a boat or two, was caught by some milk maids, who collected a great many boats for that purpose, and that, by command of the magistrates, she was carried to Haerlem, where she lived fifteen or sixteen years out of her element, with only her tail in a pail of water. She did not speak, but clearly evinced reason, by learning to spin, laughing, signifying that she understood the conversation of the other spinsters who visited her, and, above all, udevotly attending to prayer. Now as her portrait was placed in the town-house of Haerlem, where it continues to this day; and as under it there is an inscription, in letters of gold, relating the manner she was caught, how long she lived, when she died, and in what *church-yard* she was buried; this must be held conclusive, as the magistrates of Haerlem would never have been daring enough to publish a falsity which could have been so easily detected. This historical account is particularly valuable, as it proves incontestibly that the Mermaid is an animal approximating to the human race, not only in figure but in mind. It were indeed to have been wished that the historian had entered still more particularly into her characteristics and domestic habits, and described how she slept, her manner of taking exercise, the mode by which she expressed her wants, &c.; but these and other curious particulars will doubtless be found in the repositories of Dutch and Flemish antiquaries.

The last, and not the least curious piece of evidence is the letter of Mr Archibald James, Jun. giving a relation of what he properly call a Merboy, exhibited, about 38 or 40 years ago, at Leith, in Scotland; which he describes most accurately, and states it to have been preserved in the late Mr. Weir's Museum. This account is the more to be depended

on, as the writer refers to the testimony of hundreds, who must have seen it at the same time.

All these testimonials, which hereafter follow at length, have been published in the newspapers, and have created a strong general interest. I have therefore thought that it might be particularly useful to science, to incorporate the whole in the present form, in order to promote a farther investigation of so important a branch of natural history; and having no doubt that it will be productive of additional proofs of the existence of this phenomenon. I shall, however, in the first place, make one or two observations.

Skeptics will undoubtedly catch hold of the variety of appearance of the different animals described. Miss Mackay's Mermaid, for example, they will say had grey eyes and green hair, while Mr. Munro's had blue eyes and brown hair; but this is the most common variety of the human figure, and in other respects they agree very much; only that of the fingers of Miss Mackay's were not webbed, while Mr. Munro, though he could distinctly see the colour of the eyes of his, was not able to discover whether the fingers were webbed or not. They will also be apt to say, that Miss Mackay contradicts herself, assigning, in the first place, green oily hair to her maid, and saying elsewhere, "we saw nothing like hair or scales on any part of it." This however would be merely cavilling at an expression, as the lady undoubtedly meant its lower parts. Again we shall be told that Mr. Munro's was exercised combing its hair, while Miss Mackay's with its hands threw back its hair and washed its throat. This is in fact no difference. Mr. Munro did not mean to say that the Mermaid used an artificial comb, but that given it by nature; and this I think is sufficiently explained by Mr. James's description of the Merboy, the fingers of which he

says were fortified by long slender and transparent nails, like the teeth of a tortoise-shell comb.

It will perhaps be said, how are we to believe Miss Mackay or Mr. Munro more than the "lower class," whose assertions that they had seen mermaids were disbelieved and combated by the ladies and gentleman until their own ocular demonstration? Have they better eyes than the "lower class; and is not the veracity of the lower class as much to be depended on as theirs, always excepting the certificate of Mr. Mackay? — To this it may be answered, that although the "lower class" may have been furnished by nature with equally good eyes, they did not, from want of education, know a mermaid when they saw her, and perhaps even mistook a seal for a mermaid; whereas these more erudite witnesses, having, in the course of their reading and scientific researches, become perfectly acquainted with the description this demifish, they could not be mistaken, especially as, being of the "higher class," they cannot be suspected of being biassed by vulgar prejudice. Thus, had the two women and the boy, who saw the mermaid at the same time with Miss Mackay and her cousin, been then alone, their story would not have been believed either by these ladies or any person else; nor would Mr. Mackay, however honest and credible persons these his three servants may be, have been ready to certify the genuineness of their assertions to the Glasgow Philosophical Society.

Mr. Munro will probably be asked, why he concealed the appearance of his mermaid a dozen of years, why he now brings it forward, and why he expects to be believed on his word, when he declares that he would not believe the testimony of others on the subject, and that it was only by seeing the animal itself that he was satisfied of its existence? All this he may easily answer by saying, that it was the very

fear of not being believed that made him keep the matter private, and that he now brings it forward corroborated by the testimonies of the ladies, and on the other hand to corroborate theirs.

Such are the principal objections which I conceive can be made to the narratives of Miss Mackay and Mr Munro, and I trust the answers I have given to them will be deemed satisfactory.

In the description of the merwoman of Haerlem we find nothing materially contradictory to that of the mermaids of Sandside Bay. But the merboy of Leith is altogether of so different an appearance from the rest, as to give a handle for refusing credit to the whole. This, however, would be unfair, and indeed ridiculous, as of the mermaid genus there are doubtless various species. Besides, the difference of age and sex may, of itself, be a sufficient cause of all the difference of figure.

Before I conclude, I shall hazard one conjecture, namely, that the appearance of mermaids has been frequent in ancient times, although from the superstitious ideas of the people they were deemed beings altogether different. Whoever views the heathen mythology in its proper light is sensible, that their gods were men deified (as the saints of the Roman Catholic Calendar were canonized) for their superior virtue or, more frequently, as being the inventors or promoters of arts useful to mankind; as Apollo, the god of music, poetry, and the sciences; Mars, the god of war; Bacchus, the god of wine; Vulcan, the god of artificial fire; Æsculapeus, the god of physic; Ceres, the goddess of agriculture; &c. Now, as their aquatic gods could not be derived from the same source, these must have had their origin in that element; and what can be more probable, than that the Tritons, and sea nymphs, and even Neptune and Amphitrite, were no

other than the mermaids, male and female, which frequented the coasts of Greece and Italy? Nay, Venus herself, who is recorded to have sprung from the sea, there is reason to believe, was neither more or less than a fair Tritoness, occasionally seen basking on the rocks in the Archipelago, and, like the mermaid of Munro, combing her golden tresses, so finely described by Homer and Virgil. (See *Cicero de Natura Deorum*.) This, as I have already mentioned, I only throw out as a conjecture, for the consideration of the learned, and which I trust will not be deemed unworthy of investigation by the society of antiquaries.

TESTIMONIALS.

No. I.

Letter from Miss Mackay, daughter of the Rev. David Mackay, Minister of Reay, to Mrs. Innes, Dowager of Sandside.

MADAM

Reay Manse, May 25, 1809.

To establish the truth of what has hitherto been considered improbable and fabulous, must be at all times a difficult task, and I have not the vanity to think that my testimony alone would be sufficient for this purpose; but when to this is added that of four others, I hope it will have some effect in removing the doubts of those who may suppose that the wonderful appearance I reported having seen in the sea on the 12th of January, was not a Mermaid, but some other uncommon, though less remarkable, inhabitant of the deep. As I would willingly contribute to remove the doubt of the skeptical on this subject, I beg leave to state to you the following account, after premising

that my cousin, whose name is *prefixed* along with mine, was one of the four witnesses who beheld with me this uncommon spectacle.

While she and I were walking by the sea-shore, on the 12th of January, about noon, our attention was attracted by seeing three people who were on a rock at some distance, shewing signs of terror and astonishment at something they saw in the water; on approaching them, we distinguished that the object of their wonder was a face resembling the human countenance, which appeared floating on the waves; at that time nothing but the face was visible. It may not be improper to observe, before I proceed further, that the face, throat, and arms are all I can attempt to describe; all our endeavours to discover the appearance and position of the body being unavailing. The sea at that time ran very high, and as the waves advanced, the Mermaid gently sunk under them, and afterwards re-appeared. The face seemed plump and round, the eyes and nose small, the former were of a light grey colour, and the mouth was large, and from the shape of the jawbone, which seemed straight, the face looked short; as to the inside of the mouth I can say nothing, not having attended to it, though sometimes open.—The forehead, nose and chin were white; the whole side face of a bright pink colour. The head was exceedingly round, the hair thick and long, of a green oily cast, and appeared troublesome to it, the waves generally throwing it down over the face; it seemed to see the annoyance, and, as the waves retreated with both its hands frequently threw back the hair and rubbed its throat, as if to remove any soiling it might have received from it. The throat was slender, smooth, and white; we did not think of observing whether it had elbows; but from the manner in which it used its arms, I must conclude that it had. The arms were very long and slender, as were the hands and fingers; the latter were not webbed. The arms, one of them at least, was frequently extended over its head, as if to frighten a bird that hovered over it, and seemed to distress it much; when that had no effect, it sometimes turned quite round several times successively. At a little distance we observed a seal. It sometimes laid its right hand under its cheek, and in this position floated for some time. We saw nothing like hair or scales on any part of it; indeed the smoothness of the skin particularly caught our attention. The time it was discernible to us was about an hour. The sun was shining clearly at that time; it was distant from us a few yards only. These are the few observations made by us during the appearance of this strange phenomenon.

If they afford you any satisfaction, I shall be particularly happy. I have stated nothing but what I clearly recollect; as

my cousin and I had frequently, previous to this period, combated an assertion which is very common among the lower class here, that Mermaids had been frequently seen on this coast, our evidence cannot be thought biassed by any former prejudice in favour of the existence of this wonderful creature.

To contribute, in any degree, to your pleasure or amusement, will add to the happiness of,

Madam,

Your greatly obliged,

(Signed)

ELIZ. MACKAY.

C. MACKENZIE.

No. II.

Letter from Mr. William Munro, Schoolmaster of Thurso, to Dr. Torrence, regarding a Mermaid seen by him some years ago.

DEAR SIR,

Thurso, June 9, 1809.

Your queries respecting the Mermaid are before me. From the general skepticism which prevails among the learned and intelligent about the existence of such a phenomenon, had not your character and real desire for investigation been too well known to me, for supposing that you wished to have a fertile imagination indulged by a subject of meriment, I would have been disposed to have concluded, that in this instance, you aimed at being ranked among the laughing philosophers, at my expense. Sensible however, that this is not the case, and taking it for granted that you are sincere, I shall endeavour to answer your queries, though there is little probability that any testimony which I can give respecting the Mermaid, will operate towards convincing those who have not hitherto been convinced by the repeated testimonies adduced in support of the existence of such an appearance.

About twelve years ago, when I was parochial schoolmaster at Reay, in the course of my walking on the shore of Sandside Bay, being a fine warm day in summer, I was induced to extend my walk towards Sandside Head, when my attention was arrest-

ed by the appearance of a figure, resembling an unclothed human female, sitting upon a rock extending into the sea, and apparently in the action of combing its hair, which flowed around its shoulders, and of a light brown colour. The resemblance which the figure bore to its prototype, in all its visible parts, was so striking, that had not the rock on which it was sitting been dangerous for bathing, I would have been constrained to have regarded it as really an human form, and to any eye unaccustomed to the situation, it must have undoubtedly appeared as such. The head was covered with hair of the colour above mentioned, and shaded on the crown, the forehead round, the face plump, the cheeks ruddy, the eyes blue, the mouth and lips of a natural form resembling those of a man; the teeth I could not discover, as the mouth was shut; the breasts and abdomen, the arms and fingers, of the size of a full grown body of the human species; the fingers, from the action in which the hands were employed, did not appear to be webbed, but of this I am not positive. It remained on the rock three or four minutes after I observed it, and was exercised during that time in combing its hair, which was long and thick, and of which it appeared proud, and then dropped into the sea, which was level with the abdomen, from whence it did not re-appear to me. I had a distinct view of its features, being at no great distance, on an eminence above the rock on which it was sitting, and the sun brightly shining. Immediately before its getting into its natural element, it seemed to have observed me, as its eyes were directed towards the eminence on which I stood. It may be necessary to remark, that previous to the period I beheld this object, I had heard it frequently reported by several persons, and some of them persons whose veracity I never heard disputed, that they had seen such a phenomenon as I have described, though then, like many others, I was not disposed to credit their testimony on this subject. I can say of a truth, that it was only by seeing the phenomenon I was perfectly convinced of its existence.

If the above narrative can in any degree be subservient towards establishing the existence of a phenomenon, hitherto almost incredible to naturalists, or to remove the skepticism of others, who are ready to dispute every thing which they cannot fully comprehend, you are welcome to it from,

Dear Sir, your most obliged,

And most humble servant,

WILLIAM MUNRO.

To Dr. Torrence, Thurs.

No. III.

To the Editor of the Glasgow Courier.

SIR,

The letters from Caithness respecting the Mermaid, which have lately appeared in the public prints, having excited considerable attention, the Glasgow Philosophical Society, by their Secretary, wrote to the Rev. Mr. MACKAY, Minister of Reay, to ascertain the authenticity of these documents. The following polite answer was, in due course, received by the Society.—
I am, &c.

JAMES WATT, Pres.

*Society's Hall,
Oct. 15, 1809.*

"SIR,

"In terms of your and the Philosophical Society's request, I have to inform you, that my daughter wrote a letter to Mrs. INNES, Dowager of SANDSIDE, concerning the strange phenomenon seen near this place, merely for private information; without the smallest suspicion of any other use to be made of it. But having excited Sir JOHN SINCLAIR'S curiosity, he obtained a copy of this letter, and it seems that by one of his friends it found its way to the English newspapers. Though I never saw the letter, either originally or in the papers, I have good reason to suppose that it is a genuine document.

With regard to the animal's timidity, I have only to say, that two servant maids and a boy being at the time down among the rocks, it was the cries of the boy that made it first disappear. It soon re-appeared farther out in the sea, and ultimately disappeared, after having taken its course a considerable way along the shore, the spectator's following, and walked on until they lost hope of its coming up again. The schoolmaster of Thurso's letter is also genuine; and he is a gentleman whose veracity is not called in question.

I am, respectfully, Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

DAVID MACKAY,

James Boag, Esq. Sec. Phil. Soc.

High-street, Glasgow.

No. IV.

The Merwoman of Haerlem:

In a history of the Netherlands, it is stated, that in the year 1403. the dykes were broken, near Campvear, by an inundation; and when the inundation had returned, a Merwoman was left in the Dermet-mere; and the milk maids, who used to cross that mere in boats, when they went to milk, saw a human head above water, but believed their eyes deceived them, till the repeated sight confirmed their assurance, whereupon, they resolved one night to watch her, and saw that she repaired to a feggy or flaggy place, where it was ebb, and near the side; whereupon, early in the morning, they got a great many boats together, and environed the place, in the form of a half moon, and disturbed her; but she, attempting to get under the boats, and finding her way stopped up by boats and other things, on purpose fastened, began to flounce, and make a hideous deafening noise, and with her hands and tail sunk a boat or two; but at last was tired out and taken. The maids used her kindly, and cleaned the sea-moss and shells from off her, and offered her water, fish, milk, bread, &c. which she refused; but, with good usage, in a day or two, they got her to eat and drink, though she endeavoured to make her escape again to sea: her hair was long and black, her face human, her teeth very strong, her breasts and belly to the navel were perfect—the lower parts of her body ended in a strong fish tail. The magistrates of Haerlem commanded her to be sent to them, the mere being within their jurisdiction. When she was brought thither, she was put in the Town-house, and had a dame assigned to teach her; she learned to spin, and shew devotion to prayers; she would laugh, and when the women came into the Town-house to spin with her for diversion, she would signify by signs she knew the irmeaning, though she could never be taught to speak. She would wear no clothes in summer; part of her hair was filleted up in a Dutch dress, and part hang long and naturally. She would have her tail in the water, and accordingly had a pail of water under her chair made on purpose for her. She ate milk, water, bread, butter and fish. She lived thus, out of her element (except her tail) fifteen or sixteen years. Her portrait was painted on a board with oil, and hangs now in the Town-house of Haerlem, with a subscription in letters of gold, giving an account when she was taken, how long she lived, when she died, and in what church yard she was buried. Their annals mention her, their books have her picture; and travelling painters draw her portrait from the picture in the Town-house. By the above relation the querist may be satisfied that she exceeds all the other creatures in cunning and docility that have ever yet been known.

No. V.

To the Editor of the Morning Advertiser,

SIR,

Two accounts recently published in several newspapers, (and ushered into the world under the eminent sanction of Sir John Sinclair) of the appearance of mermaids off the coast of Caithness, and which have excited much curiosity, seem satisfactorily to demonstrate the existence of these remarkable oceanic animals, by naturalists heretofore deemed fabulous. Both narratives are from persons of respectability, who had themselves ridiculed the reports of the common people, reports which it now appears were perfectly well founded. Yet there are still skeptics who not only deride the popular reports, but the more accurate and well authenticated narrations of the ladies and gentleman above quoted, merely because no such animal has been described by naturalists; but if these learned personages will not take the trouble of going to the proper places, and making a thorough and persevering examination and scrutiny, how can they expect to see their rare animals, either terrestrial or marine?

As France takes, at present, decidedly the lead in scientific research, and her philosophers have made many discoveries of phenomena before universally discredited, I have no doubt but, immediately on the return of peace, Bonaparte, whose patronage of science in no inconsiderable degree counterbalances his atrocities, will station a corps of *Savans* off Sandside Bay, Caithness, to ascertain this important fact of natural history, I trust however that he will be anticipated by our own Royal Society, and that, in a short time, Mr. Pidcock will be enabled to exhibit, at his menagerie over Exeter Change, as many mermaids as he now does black swans, birds which, until the discoveries of his present Majesty's reign, were also believed to be non-existent, or at least to be equally rare as white mice, white crows, white black-birds or any other *lusi Naturæ*, instead of being a distinct and numerous species.

But, say the skeptics, we hear only of *mermaids*, and if they be literally all maids, they cannot generate. I am happy Sir, that it is in my power to answer this objection, and to shew incontrovertibly, that God created them, male and female, like other animals.

About 38 or 40 years ago, there was exhibited, at Leith in Scotland, during the races, a *merman*, which had been caught by

A Newhaven fisherman when dragging for oysters, and was shewn for three-pence a piece, in a booth near the glass-house, I have called it a *merman*, from its gender, but from its stature, being only a foot and a half long, and the mermaids of which we have heard and read having been represented as of the ordinary size of women, this I suppose must have been a young one, and ought more properly to be termed a *merboy*.

Being little skilled either in anatomy or natural history, I cannot give your readers a scientific description of this extraordinary production of the sea; but the following account, as far as it goes, they may depend on being accurate, as I examined the animal with all the attention in my power.

The head was larger, in proportion to the body than the human head, and joined by a short thick neck. The hair was of a marine blue, wiry and bushy; the face was covered with scales; the eyes projected like those of a haddock; the nose was broad and flat, like that of an African negro; the lips thin and white, and the teeth remarkably sharp. The ears were merely two valves close to the head, doubtless wisely ordained to prevent the introduction of water. The breasts were flat, and, as well as the rest of the body in front, covered by a shell like a lobster, but with an alternation of blue and white across, producing an appearance somewhat similar to a sailors, striped waistcoat. The arms were short, the fingers webbed, and fortified with remarkably long slender and transparent nails, not unlike the teeth of a tortoise-shell comb. It had two tails, of a pale red colour, the one somewhat shorter than the other: whether this was the natural conformation of the animal, or had been occasioned by external injury, cannot be known but by comparison. These tails, as well as the back, were covered by a thick tough skin without scales, and it was provided with both a dorsal and a caudal fin. The marks of sexual distinction were easily perceptible, but minute, probably from the creature not being fully grown; and there appears every reason to believe it to be viviparous and that it engenders like man and the cetaceous fishes.

The foregoing account can be attested by hundreds of the inhabitants of Leith and Edinburgh. Indeed I have been informed that this phenomenon was preserved by the late ingenious Mr. Alexander Weir, was considered one of the most rare specimens in his valuable museum, and is now in the collection of an eminent lawyer. I am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

ARCH. JAMES, Jun.

Mount Pleasant,
Cold Bath Fields,
Oct. 2th, 1809. }

I hereby certify that the foregoing account by my neighbour, Mr. Archibald James, Jun. is genuine;—Mr. James, being a man of veracity, and I myself having seen at Leith the merboy there exhibited.

GEORGE SMITH

Elms Street,
Gray's Inn Lane, }
Oct, 30, 1809.

Natural History of the Mermaid.

The existence of Mermaids having been proved in the preceding pages, to a demonstration altogether unquestionable, the learned cannot fail to direct their researches so as to obtain a full knowledge of this animal, at least as far as their relative situations with it permit; and as the Glasgow Philosophical Society have already shewn their anxious desire of information respecting this new branch of Natural History, they will doubtless continue their investigation unremittingly to obtain this great end, in which they will be strenuously assisted by Miss Mackay, Miss Mackenzie, Mr. Munro, and other *cognoscenti* on the coast of Caithness; where by their exertions it is to be hoped that at least one Mermaid may be caught, and, like the Merwoman of Haerlem instructed in the arts of human life; so that a complete knowledge may be obtained of this phenomenon.

Having paid no small attention to this subject, I shall take the liberty of making a few observations on the origin and nature of Mermaids.

The French Philosopher De Maillet has employed much argument to prove, that all mankind have sprung from Mermaids. To go into any detail of his reasoning would far exceed my limits; nor is it necessary, it being sufficient to refer the learned reader to his celebrated work

entitled *Telliamed*. I shall, however, give the substance of his hypothesis, from a scarce Poem called *Les Systemes*, ascribed to Voltaire, but not in his works.

“Notre Consul Maillet (non pas Consul de Rome) /
Sait comment ici bas naquit le premier homme :
D’abord il fut poisson, de ce pauvre animal
Le berceau tres changeant fut du plus fin cristal.”

Which may be thus translated :

“Consul De Maillet held, that Grandfather Adam
Was created a Mermaid ; a she Mermaid madam ;
But at length the great God, with omnipotent hand,
From their cradle of crystal them plac’d on dry land ;
And from ploughing the deep ordain’d them to feed, in
The shady retreats in the Garden of Eden.”

This system, however, savours too much of the false philosophy of the French ; and notwithstanding De Maillet’s literary and scientific eminence, he certainly made few converts, even in that fantastic nation.

My idea on the subject is not only different, but totally the reverse of the foregoing. On the most profound deliberation I am satisfied, that Mermaids are neither coeval with the creation, nor a distinct genus, but merely a variety of the human race, sprung, like all mankind, from our first parents ; that they have from time immemorial emigrated to the ocean ; and thus changing their element, have almost entirely changed their habits and character.

It is well known, that in many nations (of those we call savage) living on the sea-coast, the inhabitants are from their infancy so accustomed to the water, that they become almost amphibious, living on fish, which they catch by their celerity and dexterity in swimming and diving. That this

is the case will be seen in the voyages of all circumnavigators, especially in their accounts of the South Sea Islands and the west coast of America. Now, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that at some early period, parties of this description, male and female, may have gone too far from the shore, in pursuit of their prey, and having no compass to direct them in their return, they became necessarily actual residents in the deep, to which, having no want of food or of the means of supplying other calls of appetite, they easily became accustomed. Their aquatic progeny by degrees threw off entirely their terrestrial habits, and even in a certain degree changed their figure. Nature, ever provident, has adapted each creature to its clime; and animals removing from one country to another undergo such changes as to render them fitted for their actual residence. Thus a sheep carried from this country to the torrid zone, will, instead of the fleecy covering which is here necessary to its warmth and comfort, in two or three years become covered by short and thin hair. In like manner, as these new inhabitants of the sea had no occasion to use their legs and feet, nature wisely replaced them with a tail or tails, as more congenial to the element, and better adapted for their exercise of swimming; and, with the same view, fins became necessary appendages to their body. That they have lost the use of speech is probable; not from any defect of the organs, but from want of practice, and the difficulty of exercising them in the water. I intend at a future period to submit to the scientific world a comprehensive disquisition in support of this mine hypothesis, and shall therefore at present enter no farther into it; but conclude by stating that I have been more confirmed in its truth by the perusal of a Spanish work on Natural History,

by Dr Juan Fransisco Tromposo, of the University of Salamanca, printed at Madrid, in 1678. In a chapter, titled, *On Terraqueal Animals*, the learned author gives the following narrative; from which it satisfactorily appears, that a man lived for fourteen years together in the ocean; that he had then totally changed his habits; had almost-entirely lost the use of speech, and, in that comparatively short space, so far changed his figure, that his hands and feet had become webbed, and fins had grown out of his back and rump. The following is a correct translation of Dr Tromposo's account:

“ In the village of Suanas, on the coast of Asturias, lived Philip Garcia, an industrious fisherman, whose only means of procuring subsistence for himself and a numerous family was the produce of his nets. Antonio, the youngest of nine children, was the old man's particular favorite, and constantly attended his father from early infancy. Being thus in a manner brought up in the sea, he became so inured to it, that he could live almost as well in the water as on land, frequently swimming for twelve, fourteen or fifteen hours together, and diving under water for an hour at a time, without difficulty or inconvenience. In fine he was so habituated to the ocean, that it was easier for him to swim than to walk, and when sent on a message to any place round the coast he chose generally, to go by water. All this before he was twelve years of age.

At this age, young Antonio having one day committed some *faux pas*, which his father thought merited correction, and seeing him about to prepare the strapado, made a precipitate retreat towards the sea, into which he immediately plunged, to escape parental punishment. This happened about the year 1580. Old Garcia well knowing the *fishified* nature of his boy, was nowise discomposed at the circumstance, but retired to his hut, satisfied that he would on his son's return have the opportunity of inflicting the discipline. Night however came and no appearance of Antonio; still the father was nowise apprehensive, but when day returned without

any intelligence of him, he began to suspect he had made his escape by water to some other village on the coast. Impressed with this idea he set off on foot in search of his son; but after great fatigue of body and anxiety of mind in a fortnight's incessant enquiry, he returned home without the smallest hope of ever again beholding him. The only rational conclusion he could form was, that he had met with Jonah's misfortune, but had not experienced the deliverance of that prophet: in fact, that he had been devoured by a shark—these monsters being very frequent in the Bay of Biscay; ruminating on which, and accusing himself as the premenary cause, he fell into a melancholy state, which shortly ended in his death.

About fourteen years afterwards, some fishermen in the same village, on dragging their net, were astonished and appaled, when they found in it a wild animal of a figure like a human being, whom with the utmost difficulty they could master, by securing him with ropes till they brought him on shore; but when come to land, the legs of the monster (as they thought him) being at liberty, he ran directly for Garcia's hut, with a grin of complacency on his countenance. Some of the fishermen from this circumstance, recollected the disappearance of Antonio, whom they all had supposed to be either drowned or devoured by some monster of the deep. They therefore immediately led him to some of Garcia's family who still lived near the spot, and by whom he was instantly recognized, not from his looks or features, for these were entirely altered, but from a remarkable hyper-sarcosis on his right shoulder, to be the identical Antonio their brother.

It would be hard to say whether the joy or grief of his relation was more poignantly felt; for he exhibited no recollection of them, but stared about with the appearance of an idiot; nor could they make him utter a syllable except a hum drum groan, as if he suffered oppression on the lungs."

Dr. Tromposo proceeds for about thirty pages to detail the manner in which the poor creature thus rescued from the sea appeared and lived on land; which, though extremely interesting, would be too long to copy in this place, I shall therefore content myself with a summary of its contents.

Antonio had during his residence in the deep acquired on his back a pretty large fin and a smaller one on his rump : his hands too and feet had become webbed ; but all these marine excrescences gradually decreased, and in about a year entirely subsided. His hair was remarkably long, thick, and strong, being quite black ; a beard of rather a bluish cast hang down to his breast ; but no hair appeared on any part of his body. He never would eat any bread or garden stuffs, nor could he taste warm victuals : but he ate heartily of any sort of cold meat, preferring it however raw. Fish of all food was his delight, if immediately caught ; but if kept only a couple of hours he betrayed disgust, calling for *carne* (flesh) one of the very few words he learnt to articulate. He discovered also an aversion to fresh water, or at least greatly preferred the sea water when he could get it. He never could be brought to taste wine, but was remarkably fond of brandy, which was obliged to be kept from him, as having got once intoxicated with it he became so furious that it was with difficulty he could be got under. He was extremely docile and seemed to understand most that was said to him ; but having often signified a desire to get back to the sea, looking wishfully towards it, he was obliged to be kept bound. In this manner he lived, rather in a melancholy state, for two years and seven months, when he somehow contrived to make his escape, and to regain what had become as it were his natural element.

P. S. We stop the press (according to the newspaper phrase) to insert the following most important document, which is a complete *clinch*er to the mermaidian system.

From the Glasgow Courier.

THE MERMAID.—A letter from Arasaig, dated Sept. 22, says, “ the following declaration was this day emitted, in presence of the after-subscribing witnesses :—

“ NEIL M'INTOSH, in Sandy Island, Canna, states, that he has heard from different individuals in the island of Canna that they have seen the fish called Mermaids ; that these animals had the upper parts resembling the human

figure, and the lower extremities resembling a fish. In particular, about six years ago, NEIL STEWART and NEIL M'ISAAC, both alive in Canna, when walking upon the sea beach, on the north end of the island, on a Sunday, saw, stretched on a rock at a small distance, an animal of the above description, having the appearance of a woman in the upper parts and of a fish below; that on seeing them it sprung into the water, after which they had a more distinct view of its upper parts, which strongly resembled a female of the human species. That LACHLAN M'ARTHUR, of the same island, informed M'INTOSH, that some years ago, sailing from Uist Skye in a stormy day, he saw rising from the water, near the stern of the boat in which he was, a figure resembling a woman in its upper parts, which terrified him extremely.

"N. M'INTOSH further stated, that he himself, about five years ago, was steering a boat from Canna to Skye in a stormy day; and when about one-fourth of the passage from Canna, he saw something near him of a white colour, and of the human figure, spring almost out of the water, which he took for the animal above described; but as it instantly disappeared again, he had no opportunity of examining it minutely; that he felt considerable alarm at the sight of it, as a general opinion or prejudice exists amongst the inhabitants of the Western Isles, that it is extremely unlucky to meet with or look upon such animals at sea, or to point them out to the rest of the crew, unless they observe it themselves:

"Signed, NEIL M'INTOSH; ROB BROWN, factor for CLANRANALD. witness; DONALD M'NEAL, of Canna, witness; WILLIAM CAMPBELL, W.S. Edinburgh, witness; JAMES GILLESPIE, Architect, Edinburgh, witness.

Portree, Oct. 2, 1809.

"That what is above written is a true copy of the original.

Attes d

"MALCOLM WRIGHT, N. P."



